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## SNAPSHOT

# Strengthening a Key Link in Kandahar

**Wakeels, unpaid elected community representatives, act as liaisons between constituents and the municipal office**



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*More than 85 wakeels attended the three-day training in Kandahar*

***In close coordination with the Kandahar City Municipality, USAID has been training the wakeels to develop their communication skills and organizational capacity.***

Wakeels are unpaid elected community-level representatives who act as liaisons between constituents and the municipal office, in Kandahar City. They promote the interests and needs of their communities and function as community advocates.

One significant gain in governance in Kandahar City over the past few years has been the establishment and strengthening of a corps of wakeels to represent neighborhoods, villages, and communities to the Afghan Government. As the primary link between the government and the population, wakeels can play a crucial role in improving citizens' perceptions of the government. However, skills and organizational capacity of wakeels were uneven.

USAID's Community Cohesion Initiative organized advocacy training for wakeels. The Wakeel training grew out of a suggestion from the Kandahar City Municipality, and was closely coordinated with Kandahar City's Major other representatives of the municipal government.

More than 85 participants attended the three-day event, including the mayor, deputy mayor, admin officers, and 80 wakeels. The agenda included discussion of the roles of wakeels, presentations by individual wakeels on best practices, and discussions between wakeels and the Mayor on future strategies and activities. Training also helped the wakeels develop better strategies for communicating with their communities to ensure that they are seen as their legitimate representatives.

Training participants agreed on 10 key roles and responsibilities of wakeels and the election of a Wakeel Executive Committee that will meet regularly with the Mayor.

The success of this first training sets the stage for more specialized ones to be held on topics chosen by wakeels themselves.